

*Trans-Woolf: Thinking Across Borders*. Claire Davison and Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio, eds. (Morlacchi Editore UP, 2017) 297 pp.

Published in the *European Modernism* series, *Trans-Woolf: Thinking Across Borders* is the fruit of long-term research by the Société d'Etudes Woolfiennes (14). Albeit with different perspectives, approaches and aims, all eleven essays in the collection focus on Woolf's writing by extensively exploring its multiple relationships with the semiotic practice of *translation*, whose Latin prefix—i.e. “trans”—emblematically appears in the book's title.

The volume's investigative approach is highlighted by its structure, with the essays organized into six major sections. Whereas some of them take a new look at intertextual dialogues in Woolf's works, on both the artistic/disciplinary and contextual/social levels, others focus on their inter- and intra-linguistic sharing, adaptation, manipulation and creation. *Transmedial*, *transmission*, *transgression* and *transfixation* are just some of the terms used in the section titles to convey the significance of “trans” as it is applied and researched in each part of the volume. In their brief but persuasive introduction, the editors Claire Davison and Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio insist on the twofold essence of the trans-tension that pervades the entire volume, as being both a premise to any act of translation and truly constitutive of Woolf's own philosophy (14). On the basis of this dualism, the figure of the translator provides the editors with a good meta-textual instance of what *Trans-Woolf* intends to achieve in terms of criticism. Indeed, just as the translator's work consists of “thinking outside familiar mappings, crossing borders, and thereby imagining survival” (13), the collected essays appear to act as “translational encounters” (13) that convert the dynamics of translation into a fruitful object of investigation concerning Woolf's writings.

The first section, “*Translational ethics*,” immediately provides the reader with some interesting ways of conceiving translation as it relates to Woolf's writing, such as the “untranslatability” of Flush's experience abroad (30) that Catherine Bernard notes in *Flush: A Biography*. Moreover, while discussing the factual and tropic value of *transport* (30), Bernard stresses the double encounter between languages and spaces in the act of translating and travelling respectively: in both cases, contact of some kind—although oriented in opposite directions—is enabled by the subject's own movement (33). Indeed, as Bernard further observes, the English noun “translation” conveys “displacement” (24), which was also manifested during modernism in both an “imaginary” and a bodily kind of “dislocation” (26).

Another significant movement emerges especially in Woolf's late works. Elsa Högborg points to a backward tendency (51–52), which is further mirrored in the varying relationship between individualism and community (58). This idea is strengthened by the subtle process of “reverse translation” that Högborg envisages

in the novel *Between the Acts* (52, 57), where the “modern Anon” who is Miss La Trobe acts as a sort of “cultural translator” (48).

The following section, “*Intra-scriptural dialogues*,” starts with Claire Davison’s essay. Here, Davison explores the “soundscape” (80) that Woolf was able to create in *The Voyage Out*, by analyzing the drafts of “Melymbrosia” that she wrote before 1909. Davison links Woolf’s known familiarity with certain musical discourses to the evolutionary theories that were circulating at that time. Such links become evident in the interpretation of Woolf’s drafts in the light of Charles Darwin’s *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839).

In the same section, Jane Goldman unveils certain “*scriptural*” encounters she has while wandering through the empty house in “Time Passes” in search of any sign that has been traced and then erased in “the corridor of text” (105) formed by the central section. Goldman moves from “Time Passes” in *To the Lighthouse* to Kath Swarbrick’s “uncanny restoration” in English (105) of Charles Mauron’s “Le Temps Passe,” i.e. the French translation of an earlier draft of “Time Passes” published in *Commerce* in 1926. Through her painstaking analysis of the two English texts, Goldman reveals which changes originate from the intermediate version, i.e. Mauron’s lyrical translation, while simultaneously highlighting poetical echoes recalling French symbolism.

Lyrical vibrations in *To the Lighthouse*, attributed this time to Federico García Lorca (125), are also noted by Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio, whose essay appears together with Adèle Cassigneul’s paper in the volume’s third section, “*Words of light; transmedial spectrality*.” Smith-Di Biasio writes of her experience in Port Bou in Spain, on the border with France, the “contact zone between frontiers, languages and texts” (128). She was returning from Madrid, where she had discovered Antonio Marichalar’s Spanish translation of *To the Lighthouse*. She read it, but left it there. It was still speaking in her mind though, “with all the original hallucinatory quality” it had kept in Spanish (126). The meeting of two countries, symbolized by the chromatic confluence of the sky and sea, gave her experience in Port Bou an imprint of foreignness in the simultaneous annihilation of any geographical and cultural borders. Another encounter meanwhile occurred in her mind between Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and its Spanish translation, both reread through her memory, giving rise to the emblem of a “‘reading through’ to remembrance” (121).

Memories and journeys also play a key role in Cassigneul’s reading of Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*, which develops through the lens of multiple connections. Cassigneul relates Woolf’s personal experience in Greece to the depiction, in the character of Jacob Flanders, of a phantasmagoric Thoby Stephen, who was re-awakened in Woolf’s mind especially after she heard of Walter Lamb’s dream of him (141). Woolf’s journey and her memories, Thoby’s death and oneiric re-appearance, and the photographic (and cinematic) essence of the novel are brilliantly combined in Cassigneul’s essay.

“*Transmission and transgression in the present*,” which is the volume’s fourth section, focuses on the contemporary reception, modulation and translation of Woolf’s writings. Anne-Laure Rigeade chooses *Three Guineas* to discuss translation as a dialogic process. Analyzing certain evident changes appearing in two French translations, for example regarding the noun “outsiders” (176–77) and the strategic omission of gender specification (178–79), Rigeade is able to link the issue of communication as it is tackled in *Three Guineas* with the same issue as it pertains to the act of translating it into French. Caroline Marie’s essay is concerned with the ways in which Woolf’s works and especially her figure as a writer have been both disseminated and inherited over the years. The existence—and creation—of both a highbrow and a popular Woolf exemplifies how the writer has been the object of a concomitant process of appropriation and transgression (“appropriation autant que transgression”) (186).

Annalisa Volpone’s and Elisa Bolchi’s essays are in the volume’s closing section, “*Transfixation and embodiment*,” both focusing on the linguistic difficulties that can be encountered when rendering Woolf’s works into Italian. Volpone sheds light on a crucial issue that any Italian translator has to face, i.e. the lack of any Italian equivalent of the tense most frequently used by Woolf to reference time—namely the present perfect, as well as the past perfect (218). Hence, she focuses on the ways in which certain words—e.g. “‘transfix’ and ‘moment’”—that Woolf employed in *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* in relation to time (217) have been rendered into Italian. After analyzing all the available Italian versions—both translations and “re-translations” (237)—of passages from *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years*, Bolchi demonstrates that “a search for refined lexical constructions and complicated syntax” has unfortunately prevented some Italian translators from conserving Woolf’s rhythms and musicality (256). She argues that “a search for the right rhythm” should be instead the guiding principle of any translation of Woolf’s writings (256).

This section naturally accompanies the reader to the “*Epilogue and afterlife*” of *Trans-Woolf*, where, as both a scholar and a translator, Nadia Fusini reflects on her own personal experience of modulating Woolf’s writing in Italian. Among the structural features she admires while translating Woolf’s works are “the movement of her sentence” and “her punctuation” (272). Fusini’s conclusion to the volume exemplifies how, while providing several lenses through which to look at translation in accordance with distinct theoretical frameworks, sometimes the authors’ own transportation to the semiotic arena of translation regarding Woolf’s œuvre may itself become the focus of discussion. In addition, by lamenting previous Italian versions, where “Woolf had in fact not been *tràdita* (translated), but *tradita* (betrayed)” (266), Fusini’s “Virginia Woolf, Lost in Translation” also foregrounds the authors’ mournful awareness of potential losses and gains in and through translation, a theme which emerges throughout *Trans-Woolf*.

This volume demonstrates the continuing desire on the part of scholars to rediscover what has apparently been lost during the numberless inter-textual encounters that Woolf's writing has given rise to over the years (and is still giving rise to today), as well as attempting to grasp its fascinating complexity. *Trans-Woolf: Thinking Across Borders* thus itself represents the forum for yet another encounter, experienced by several women researchers who, from various European countries, have been brought together by the editors Davison and Smith-Di Biasio to explore the *becoming* of Woolf's own works, both beyond and against all borders and limitations.

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*Sentencing Orlando: Virginia Woolf and the Morphology of the Modernist Sentence.* Elsa Högberg and Amy Bromley, eds. (Edinburgh UP, 2018) ix + 225 pp..

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*Orlando: A Biography* is equally remarkable for its fantastic conceit and its documenting of Vita Sackville-West's life and ancestry. Critics have swooned over the rainbow of its subversive queering of sex, history, time, and biography itself, just as they have mined the granitic reality of the friend and lover who inspired Virginia Woolf to write the book. Until this collection of essays, however, we have not attended to just how radical Woolf's fictional biography is at the level of the sentence. Comprised of sixteen chapters by a stellar international line-up of scholars, expertly curated by Elsa Högberg and Amy Bromley, *Sentencing Orlando* demonstrates the myriad ways that Woolf's sweeping themes are explored through sentences every bit as allusive, innovative, and suggestive as her more celebrated modernist novels. In the process, the book offers a surprising new vocabulary to describe what is distinct about Woolf's formal experimentation in her 1928 text, from "bubbly" (Bahun 76) to "chaotic" (Putzel 139), "freakish" (Koppen 196) to "analeptic" (de Gay 60), "eruptive" (Bellamy 84) to "orgasmic" (Goldman 29). In doing so, each chapter illustrates what the editors call the "morphological variations" of Woolf's sentences as the building blocks of the "architecture" of her text (1). *Orlando*, as Högberg and Bromley underline in their lively introduction, proves itself especially well-suited to this critical methodology of close sentence-by-sentence reading. Not only do "fantasy, parody[,] and satire combine to produce a wide spectrum of different sentence types" (2), but the word's "legal and discursive" meanings are themselves examined "through Woolf's subversive treatment of material property, declarations, verdicts, censorship, sexuality and gender" (5). It is this finely conceptualized and consistently executed approach